

The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

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SYNOPSIS.

The New York police are mystified by a series of murders and other crimes. The principal clue to the criminal is the warning given to the police by a Chinaman, signed with a "clutching hand." The latest victim of the mysterious assassin is Taylor Dodge, the insurance president. His secretary, Elaine, employs Craig Kennedy, the famous amateur detective, to unravel the mystery. What Kennedy accomplished is told by his friend Jameson, a newspaper man. After many tedious attempts to put Elmwood and Dodge under suspicion, he finds the Clutching Hand is at last found to be no one other than Perry Bennett, Elaine's lawyer and the man she is engaged to marry. Thus does the plot of the Chinaman force from Bennett the secret of the whereabouts of \$100,000. Then he gives the lawyer a poison which will succeed and kills her. In the end, after exposing Bennett's side, Jameson arrives to have been summoned and surprises him dead.

SIXTEENTH EPISODE

THE CRYPTIC RING.

Kennedy had been engaged for some time in the only work outside of the Dodge case which he had consented to take for weeks.

Our old friend, Dr. Leslie, the coroner, had appealed to him to advise a very ticklish point in a Tong murder case which had set all Chinatown abuzz. It was, indeed, a very bewildering case. A Chinaman named Li Chong, leader of the Chang Wah Tong, had been poisoned, but so far no one had been able to determine what poison it was or even to prove that there had been a poison, except in the fact that the man was dead, and Kennedy had taken the thing up in a great measure because of the sudden turn in the Dodge case which had brought us into such close contact with the Chinese.

I had been watching Kennedy with interest, for the Tong was always make picturesque newspaper stories, when a knock at the door announced the arrival of Dr. Leslie anxious for some result:

"Have you been able to find out anything yet?" he greeted Kennedy eagerly as Craig looked up from his microscope.

Kennedy turned and nodded. "Your dead man was murdered by means of acetone, of which you know, the active principle is the deadly alkaloid acetone."

There are several treatments for acetone poisoning," mused Kennedy. "I would say that one of the latest and best is digitalis given hypodermically." He took down a bottle of digitalis from a cabinet, adding, "only it was too late in this case."

Just what the relations were between Long Sin and the Chang Wah Tong I have never been able to determine exactly. One thing was certain: Long Sin on his arrival to New York had offended the Tong and now that his master, Wu Pao, was here the offense was even greater for the criminal society backed no rival.

In the dark recesses of a poorly furnished cellar, sneaking as the Tong headquarters, the new leader and several of his most trusted followers were now plotting revenge. Long Sin, they believed, was responsible for the murder, and with truly oriental glee, they had obtained a hold over Wu Pao's secretary.

Their plan decided on, the Chinaman left the headquarters and made their way separately up town. They re-entered one another in the shelter of a rather poor house, before which was a board fence, in the vicinity of a fashionable apartment house. A moment's conference followed, and then the secretary glided away.

We had taken another apartment upstairs in one of the large apartment houses near a parkway.

There Long Sin was now engaged in making all possible provisions for the safety of his master. Anyone who had happened to glance up at the roof of the tall apartment building might have seen Long Sin's figure silhouetted against the sky on the top of the mansard roof near a skylight.

He had just finished fastening to the flagpole a stop rope which stretched taut across an arroyo some twenty or thirty feet wide to the next building, where it was fastened to a chimney. Again and again he tested it, and finally with a nod of satisfaction descended from the roof and went to the apartment of Wu.

There, alone, he paused for a few moments to gaze in wonder at the cryptic ring which had been the net result of his efforts to find the millions which Bennett, as the Clutching Hand, had hidden. He wore it, strangely enough, over his index finger, and as he examined it he shook his head in doubt.

Neither he nor his master had yet been able to fathom the significance of the ring.

Long Sin thought that he was unobserved. But outside, looking through the keyhole, was Wu's secretary, who had stolen in on the mission which had been set for him at the Tong headquarters.

Long Sin went over to a desk and opened a secret box in which Wu had placed several packages of money.

Kennedy looked up quickly at the



The Two Chinamen Are Surprised to See the Mystic Ring on Elaine's Finger.

name Chang Wah Tong, thinking of the investigation which the coroner had asked him to make into the murder. He and Long Sin moved a few steps away, discussing the affair.

Elaine and I were still talking over the entertainment.

She happened to place her hand on the desk near Long Sin. My hand was toward him and I did not notice this start suddenly and look at her hand. On it was the ring—the ring which, unknown to us, Long Sin had found in the passage under Aunt Tabby's garden, of which he had been robbed. Long Sin decided to recover the ring by stealth.

Elaine was still talking enthusiastically about her party, when Long Sin turned from Kennedy and moved toward me with a bow.

"The lady speaks of an Oriental reception," he remarked. "Would she care to engage a magazine?"

Elaine turned to him surprised. "Do you mean that you are a magician?" she said, a little perturbed.

He rose quickly. A cold sweat seemed to break out all over him. His nerves almost refused to respond.

He took only a few steps, began to stagger, and finally sank down on the floor.

Elaine screamed.

We rushed in from the library and drawing room.

He had fallen near the fountain and his head dropped over into the water. As he fell back he seemed to have only just enough strength to withdraw his hand from the fountain. On the stone coping, slowly and laboriously, he moved his fingers.

"What's the matter, old man?" I asked, bending over him.

There was no answer, but he managed to turn his head, and I followed the direction of his eyes.

With trembling fingers he was tracing out one by one, some letters. I looked and it blazed over me what he meant. He had written with the water:

"Pain—die."

I hurried up and almost without a word dashed out of the conservatory, down the hall and into the first car waiting outside.

"To the laboratory," I directed, giving the driver the directions, "and drive like the devil."

Prominently there was no one to see us, and I knew we broke all the speed laws of New York. I dashed into the laboratory, almost broke over the cabinet, and seized the bottle of digitalis and a hypodermic syringe, then rushed madly out again to the car.

Meanwhile some of the guests had left Kennedy, too excited to notice Long Sin in his hiding place. They had laid Craig down on a couch, and were endeavoring to revive him. Someone had already sent for a doctor, but the acutie was working quickly on its victim.

"To the laboratory," I directed, giving the driver the directions, "and drive like the devil."

While they were at work on the door, which was already swaying, Aunt Josephine and Elaine were running about, trying to find an outlet to the room.

There seemed to be no way out. Even the windows were locked.

"I don't know why they want the ring," whispered Aunt Josephine, "but they won't get it. Give it to me, Elaine."

She almost seized the ring, hitting it in her wrist. As she did so the door burst open and Wu, Long Sin and the other Chinamen rushed in.

A second later they had seized Elaine and Aunt Josephine.

Kennedy and I dashed up before the apartment house in which we knew that Long Sin lived, leaped out of the car and hurried in.

It was on the second floor, and we did not wait for the elevator but took the steps two at a time. Kennedy found the door locked. Instantly he whipped out his revolver and shot the lock in pieces. We threw ourselves against the door, the broken lock gave way and we rushed in through the front room.

No one was there, but in a back room we could hear sounds. It was Elaine and Aunt Josephine struggling with the Chinamen. Long Sin and the others had seized Elaine and Aunt Josephine was trying to help her just as we rushed in. With a blow Kennedy knocked out the secretary, while I struggled with the other Chinamen who blocked our way.

Then Kennedy went directly at Long Sin. They struggled furiously.

Long Sin, with his wonderful knowledge of jiu jitsu, might not have been a match for six other Chinamen, but he was for one, white man. With a mighty effort he threw Kennedy, rushed for the door and, as he passed through the outside room, seized a Tong ax from the wall.

Afraid of the wonderful Wu Pao, I had picked up the first thing handy, which was a taboret. I literally broke it over the head of my Chinaman, then

turned and dashed out after Long Sin just as Kennedy picked himself up and followed.

I caught up with the Chinaman and we had a little struggle, but he managed to break away and raised his ax threateningly. A shout from Kennedy caused him to turn and run down the flight of stairs. Kennedy closely behind him.

In the main hall of the apartment house were two elevator shafts facing the street entrance, some twenty-five or thirty feet away. Through the street door the janitor and two of three other men were running in. They had heard the noise of the fighting above.

Escape to the street was cut off. We were behind him on the flight of stairs.

Long Sin did not hesitate a moment. He ran to the elevator, the door of which was open, seized the elevator boy and sent him sprawling on the marble floor. Then he slammed the door and the elevator shot up.

Kennedy was only a few feet behind, and he took in the situation at a glance. He leaped into the other elevator, and before the surprised boy could interfere shot it up only a few feet behind Long Sin.

It was a wild race to the roof. Long Sin had the start, and as the elevator reached the top floor he flung it open, dashed out and through a door up to the roof itself.

A second later Kennedy's elevator stopped. Craig leaped out and fired his last shot at the legs of Long Sin as he disappeared at the top of the flight of stairs to the roof. He flung the revolver from him and followed.

Without a moment's hesitation Kennedy threw himself at Long Sin. They struggled with each other. Finally Long Sin managed to wrench one arm loose and raise the Tong ax over Kennedy's head.

Kennedy dodged back. As he did so he tripped on the very edge of the roof and went sliding down the slate of the parapet.

Fortunately he was able to catch himself in the gutter.

It was the opportunity that Long Sin wanted. He started across the roof, which he had stretched from the apartment house to the building across the court, with all the dexterity of the most expert Chinese acrobat.

At this time I had reached the roof, followed by the janitor and the elevator boy.

Kennedy was now crawling up the parapet, holding himself as best he could by some of the ornamental iron-work.

Long Sin had reached the roof on the opposite side as we can across in the direction of the last rope.

A moment later he turned and boxes at us maliciously, then disappeared behind a parapet.

Kennedy did not stop an instant.

"You follow us to the street and assist your master leave on that way," he cried. "Stay here, Walter."

Before I knew it he had seized the rope and was crawling across to the other building, pulling himself up by some of the ornamental iron-work.

Kennedy had almost reached the other roof when suddenly from behind the slight crevice Long Sin. With a quick lunge he advanced to the edge of the roof, his expression, I looked across the yawning chasm, horrified.

Steady Long Sin raised his ax above his head, gathering all the strength which he had, willing for Kennedy to approach closer. Kennedy stopped, swaying the ax down, clashing the rings at each other.

Elaine, she cried, "look out! they have knives!"

Before Elaine knew it Aunt Josephine had taken her by the arm, had dragged her into the back room, and although Long Sin and the others had rushed forward, managed to slam the door and lock it.

The Chinamen set to work immediately to pry it open.

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It was only a matter of minutes when they pulled up before the apartment house where Wu had taken the suite from which Long Sin had telephoned his message to me by name. Together Elaine and Aunt Josephine hurried in.

Kennedy went directly to the Dodge house.

I don't think I ever saw such an expression of surprise on anybody's face as that on Jennings' when he opened the door and saw us. He was aghast. Back of him we could see Marie. She looked as if she had been a ghost.

"Is Miss Elaine in?" asked Kennedy. Jennings was even too dumfounded to speak.

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Kennedy.

"Then—er—you are not ill again?" he managed to blurt out.

"It's agate!" repeated Kennedy.

"Why, explained Jennings, "didn't Mr. Jameson just now telephone that you had had a relapse in the apartment of that Chinaman, and for Miss Elaine to hurry over there right away with that bottle of medicine?"

"Kennedy waited to hear no more. Seizing me by the arm, he turned and dashed down the steps and back again into the taxicab in which we had come.

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